

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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USLO PEKING
AMCONSUL HONG KONG

S E C R E T STATE 166007

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PINR, CB, LA

SUBJECT: NEW CAMBODIAN AMBASSADOR TO LAOS

REFERENCE: VIENTIANE 1002

1. THE INFORMATION IN THIS TELEGRAM SHOULD NOT BE SHOWN TO FOREIGN NATIONALS.
2. SAM SAN, "DEMOCRATIC CAMBODIA'S" NEW AMBASSADOR TO LAOS, IS PROBABLY IDENTICAL WITH AN OFFICIAL NAMED SAM SANN WHO ACCOMPANIED FOREIGN MINISTER IENG SARY ON HIS RECENT TRIP TO SEVERAL SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES. SAM SANN, WHO
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HAD BEEN DIRECTOR OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS IN THE CAMBODIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY PRIOR TO HIS ASSIGNMENT TO VIENTIANE, WAS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE CAMBODIAN DELEGATION TO THE 1976 SESSIONS OF THE THIRD UN LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE, HELD IN NEW YORK.

3. AFTER ATTENDING THE LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE, THE

CAMBODIAN DELEGATION VISITED A NUMBER OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES.
THIOUNN PRASITH--A FAIRLY WELL KNOWN OFFICIAL WHO CONTRI-
BUTED MUCH TO THE "REVOLUTION" WHILE BASED IN PEKING--

HEADED THE DELEGATION, ALTHOUGH CAMBODIANS IN ALGERIA
MAINTAINED THAT SANN SEEMED TO BE THE MORE INFLUENTIAL OF
THE TWO MEN DURING THE GROUP'S VISIT TO THAT COUNTRY. A
MEMBER OF THE SINGAPOREAN FOREIGN MINISTRY WHO
ENCOUNTERED SANN WHILE HE WAS IN SINGAPORE IN MARCH AS A
MEMBER OF IENG SARY'S DELEGATION COMMENTED THAT HE
LOOKED VERY MUCH THE GUERRILLA FIGHTER.

4. SANN EVIDENTLY WAS BORN IN KOMPONG TRABEK, IN THE
BORDER PROVINCE OF PREY VENG, ON AUGUST 15, 1938.
LITTLE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON THE NEW AMBASSADOR'S
CAREER BEFORE 1976. CAMBODIANS IN ALGIERS AND PARIS HAVE
SAID THAT IN THE 1960'S HE WAS ASSOCIATED WITH KHIEU
SAMPHAN, NOW CHAIRMAN OF THE STATE PRESIDUM, DURING THE
LATTER'S JOURNALISTIC CAREER AND THAT IN 1975 HE
WAS COMMANDER OF THE "REVOLUTIONARY FORCES" THAT CAPTURED
NEAK LUONG, THE CRITICAL TOWN AND FERRY POINT THAT WAS
THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE LON NOL GOVERNMENT'S MILITARY
EFFORTS TO SECURE THE MEKONG. SANN SPEAKS ONLY CAMBODIAN.

5. SANN'S DESIGNATION AS AMBASSADOR TO LAOS INDICATES
THAT THE CAMBODIAN REGIME HAS OPTED FOR ANOTHER "FACELESS"
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MAN IN THE FEW AMBASSADORIAL ASSIGNMENTS IT HAS MADE
ABROAD. LIKE HIS PREDECESSOR AND HIS COLLEAGUES IN HANOI,
PEKING AND PYONGYANG, SANN, A WAR-HARDENED VETERAN, IS
PROBABLY AN EXTREMELY LOYAL AND DEDICATED MEMBER OF THE
REGIME.

6. THE DEPARTMENT WOULD LIKE TO SEE ANY ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION THAT THE EMBASSY MIGHT ACQUIRE ON SANN
DURING HIS TOUR IN VIENTIANE. VANCE

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